



**Legislative Department
Seattle City Council
Memorandum**

Date: January 17, 2014

To: Mike O'Brien, Chair
Tim Burgess, Vice Chair
Nick Licata, Member
Planning, Land Use and Sustainability Committee (PLUS)

From: Lish Whitson, Eric McConaghy, Martha Lester, and Sara Belz, Central Staff

Subject: Comprehensive Plan 2013-2014 Amendments – Threshold Decision

The Department of Planning and Development (DPD) has submitted a proposed Council Bill for the 2013-2014 Comprehensive Plan Amendments that covers five topics. Council Staff feels that two of those topics (University District and Stadium Area) are not yet ripe, and should be pulled from the legislation prior to introduction. These two topics should be considered as part of next year's Comprehensive Plan amendments when more information will be available.

Background

The proposed 2013-2014 Comprehensive Plan amendments cover five topics:

1. changes to the Central Area neighborhood plan;
2. a small change to the boundary of the Ballard-Interbay-Northend Manufacturing/Industrial Center (BINMIC);
3. new policies that would limit changes to industrial areas;
4. changes that would create a new Stadium District; and
5. changes to the University District neighborhood plan.¹

We recommend including the first three topics as part of legislation to be introduced. We recommend delaying the last two topics and instead taking them up next year when more information will be available. We will brief you on all five of the topics during the PLUS meeting on January 24, 2014. DPD provides information regarding all of the amendment under *2013-2014 Annual Amendments* here: <http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/cityplanning/completenesslist/comprehensiveplan/documents/default.htm>

Include in 2014 Legislation

We recommend including the following three proposals in the introduced legislation for the 2014 annual amendments to the Comprehensive Plan.

¹ DPD recommended not moving forward with two proposals that were part of this year's docket: a change related to the Interbay Armory and a change related to the University Urban Center boundary.

Changes to the Central Area Neighborhood Plan

These proposed changes result from planning work DPD has done with neighborhoods along 23rd Avenue in the Central Area. The proposal would amend policies in the Central Area Neighborhood Plan, add new policies and modify the FLUM. DPD describes the policy changes as:

- Identifying key nodes along 23rd Avenue at intersections of Cherry, Jackson and Union Streets;
- Community services for the elderly, youth (especially jobs) and attracting new business;
- Stronger focus on multi-cultural and diverse character; and
- Adjusting the neighborhood plan based on current conditions and opportunities.

The proposed FLUM change would redesignate a half-block, across 23rd Avenue from Garfield High School and the community center, from Multi-Family to Commercial/Mixed Use. We anticipate a future rezone proposal for this area, to allow for more intense commercial uses. Commercial uses presently exist on the block.

Council should be aware that there is a pending, quasi-judicial land use decision in the area affected by the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments (but outside the area covered by the FLUM change). This is a private request for a rezone from NC2-40 and NC2P-40 to NC3P-65, for the property addressed as 2301 E. Union Street. Martha Lester is the assigned Central Staff to this rezone.

Boundary Change for BINMIC

This proposed amendment would move the boundary of the BINMIC in Interbay, immediately to the southwest of the intersection of W. Bertona Street and 16th Avenue W. The change would place three parcels, about an acre of land, outside the BINMIC and change the designation of that land from Industrial to Commercial / Mixed Use.

DPD continues to discuss plans for the BINMIC with stakeholders in the area and characterizes this proposed change as a fine-grained adjustment of the FLUM boundary. DPD reports that the current BINMIC boundary, which would be moved by this amendment, currently cuts through a building (the QFC grocery store). Following direction in Council Resolution 31458 (which set the “docket” for Comprehensive Plan amendments to be analyzed in this cycle), DPD analyzed keeping this area in the BINMIC and found that redevelopment of the land for industrial uses was unlikely, and therefore it is reasonable to remove it from BINMIC.

New Industrial Land Policies

DPD proposes to adopt two new Comprehensive Plan policies relating to the Manufacturing /Industrial Centers (MICs): one policy in the Urban Village Element and another in the Land Use Element. The new Urban Village policy would list new criteria for the removal of land from a MIC. The new Land Use policy would disallow the rezoning of any additional land to the Industrial Commercial (IC) zone in a MIC.

The intent of these policy changes is to protect industrial land in Seattle for industrial activity by significantly raising the threshold for changing the MIC boundaries and by preventing the development of uses (large office buildings and retail stores) in the MICs that could have negative effects on industrial activity.

Consider in 2015

Both the Stadium District and the University District amendments are the first step, and are intended to provide the policy grounding for the second step, which would be significant future zoning changes. The State Growth Management Act (GMA), which guides Comprehensive Planning, and the Comprehensive Plan itself, encourages consideration of implementing zoning legislation alongside Comprehensive Plan policy changes. Despite this GMA guidance and requests by us, DPD has not yet provided us with sufficient information about those likely proposed zoning changes. The status of each of these topics is discussed below.

Stadium District

The Stadium District proposal would carve out sections of the Downtown Urban Center and Duwamish Manufacturing/Industrial Center and create a new “Stadium District” in the Comprehensive Plan and on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM), which is part of the Comprehensive Plan. The goal of this change is to create policies and zoning regulations that better reflect the unique needs and characteristics of the area around the stadiums. Lodging would be allowed throughout this district and one or two residential towers would be allowed adjacent to Pioneer Square. In part, this work responds to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the City, King County and ArenaCo, which requires “recommendations to the City Council and Mayor for new land use regulatory changes” no later than December 31, 2014.

DPD has committed to providing a preliminary draft of these zoning regulations by the end of February, but it is likely that it will take significantly longer for DPD to complete drafting and environmental review of these regulations, and to seek public input and reflect it in the proposal. We are concerned that the Council is being asked to approve Comprehensive Plan policies without understanding what the implementing zoning regulations will look like.

The Planning Commission has also asked for a delay to Council consideration of the proposed Stadium District Comprehensive Plan changes. The Commission’s reason is that any Comprehensive Plan changes should be informed by two freight studies that are also required under the MoU, and these studies won’t be completed until later in 2014.

University District

DPD has recommended a collection of amendments to the University District neighborhood plan that are intended to “provide corrections and updates” on topics where DPD’s work with the University community has found consensus. The intent of these changes is to bring the existing neighborhood plan up to date, and to continue the momentum of DPD’s work with the neighborhood.

The proposed amendments are coming to the Council in advance of a set of zoning changes that DPD is developing for the University District, including a proposed upzoning of the areas around the new light rail station. DPD is presently working on a related Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to analyze these changes. They expect to submit a rezone proposal to the Council in 2015. Additional Comprehensive Plan amendments will be submitted to the Council next year as an outgrowth of that detailed work.

While this year's proposed amendments are fairly simple and non-controversial, they do touch on issues where there is not consensus. For example, a number of changes are related to the location of new open space in the neighborhood, the topic that was the subject of most of the comments at the EIS scoping meeting. Additionally, this year's proposed amendments related to land use, height and density are likely to be amended again next year following the issuance of the final EIS.

In order to simplify this year's process and reduce duplication of work, we recommend tackling all of the University District amendments at one time, after DPD completes the EIS.

Next Steps

DPD and Central Staff will brief PLUS regarding the proposed amendments at the meeting on January 24, 2014. We recommend that Council introduce and refer a bill without the Stadium District and University District proposals on February 3, 2014 and that the PLUS committee set a date for a public hearing on the amendments in March in order to maintain the schedule for the annual amendment process that Council set in Resolution 31117.